Annotated Bibliography

Archer, J. (2005). R.I. Downplays Tests as Route to Diplomas. Education Week, 24(31), 1-25.

This source is from a periodical that addresses the graduation requirements for students across various high schools in Rhode Island. The article discusses the types of requirements and how they differ on a school-to-school basis. The author ponders on the topic of mandating a single type of requirement throughout Rhode Island schools. The most interesting point comes at the end, as a student from North Providence High School says “What’s a more accurate assessment of how well you're going to succeed in life…How well you're able to interact with other people, and juggle your life? Or how well you perform on a standardized test?”, which is followed by a quote from the then-commissioner of Education, Peter McWatters “I've never trusted state assessments to be used as gates and measures en masse.”

This source is important because it comes from 2005 and it shows how much the education system has changed in Rhode Island over the course of a decade. One of the interviewed students discusses his Capstone project at Coventry High School (I attended the school and completed my Capstone in 2012), and he discusses the level of achievement that he felt from this. This article sheds light on how students feel based on their graduation requirements, and also foreshadows the dim future of state-mandated testing as a graduation requirement.

Ujifusa, A. (2012). Exit Exams Face Pinch in Common-Core Push. Education Week, 32(6), 1-19.

This source is from a periodical that discusses how high schools in many states (including Rhode Island) are using the mandated Common-Core assessments as a graduation requirement. The article evaluates the usage of them, claiming that by setting a test-score requirement, schools are ensuring that their students are ready to enter the labor force. Starting with the class of 2016, students will be required to pass the PARCC exam in order to graduate in a Rhode Island school.

This source is extremely important, as it sheds light on the nature of the Common-Core standards and government mandated testing. Some states do not require that students pass these tests to graduate, but Rhode Island is one of the states that does. Due to the amount of government spending poured into mandated-tests, all states are required to administer some sort of Common-Core test—however, it is up to state legislature to decide whether or not it will become a graduation requirement.

Kiener, R. (2014, June 13). Dropout rate. CQ Researcher, 24, 505-528. Retrieved from <http://library.cqpress.com/>

This article is a large piece from CQ researcher that discusses the high school dropout rates across America. A portion of the article discusses graduation requirements, and government mandated policies that enforce or relax certain the criteria in high schools. The paragraphs that discuss graduation requirements present multiple sides of the argument—either lowering the standards set by schools, or increasing the standards to a higher level. According to the article, some critics see that the school graduation requirements “dumb down” the students, as schools are simply trying to push students through to increase their graduation rates. They also argue that students are simply being prepared for college; while some students graduate high school and never attend college, they are not being prepared for a career. Those who believe in maintaining and strengthening the standards is the only way to push American students into the upper echelon of the world’s elite thinkers.

This source is relevant to my research as it presents two sides of the argument of the reduction/increase of high school achievement standards. The politics of it are intriguing, as on a national level, it is a hot topic among policymakers. Many of the quotes in this piece are from representatives. While this source does not specifically address the issue in Rhode Island, it can be extrapolated to data present in Rhode Island schools’ test scores and graduation rates.

Bacon, J., & Ferri, B. (2013). The impact of standards-based reform: applying Brantlinger's critique of ‘hierarchical ideologies’. International Journal Of Inclusive Education, 17(12), 1312-1325. doi:10.1080/13603116.2013.826290

This source is a lengthy academic journal that discusses many topics related to education. One of the sections in the journal mentions the graduation requirements for students with disabilities and their efforts to receive a diploma. The article uses New York as example (NYS), and explains that students are required to pass mandated standardized testing in order to receive a regular high school diploma. According to the article, NYS passed legislature to adopt an IEP diploma, available to some students with disabilities that are unlikely candidates to pass the state testing. In addition, the NYS created a third diploma, a “local diploma”, available for students to achieve that did not qualify for the IEP diploma, but could still not obtain the Regents diploma. However, the local diploma was previously available for all students to obtain; and the change in state legislature put an end to this. As a result, students in minority groups or English Language Learners that could not pass the Regents were left without any option to obtain a diploma.

This source is important because it shows the effect that any state legislature related to education has on the student body. By making it easier for special education students, minority groups and English Language Learners (with a bad track record when it comes to passing the Regents exams) were left without an option. This source fits my topic on the “politics of graduation requirements” well.

Manna, P., & Harwood, T. (2011). Governance and Educational Expectations in the U.S. States. State Politics & Policy Quarterly, 11(4), 483-509. doi:10.1177/1532440011421302

This source addresses the relationship between state-appointed officials in setting educational expectations. A meaningful quote from the article is “The federal constitution fails to mention education in any of its articles or amendments, while state constitutions commonly address it in detail” (Manna & Harwood). Largely, education is handled on a state-by-state basis. In addition, states have different ways of electing education officials—some states have elections, some have the legislators vote, and some states have officials appointed directly by the governor.

This is important because it shows the difference in education across the country. As different states do different things, the education system varies across the country. Furthermore, the states where the lead education official is appointed directly by the governor can lead to conflict; education in the said state would be unified under one idealist, which could lead to backlash from district education officials across the state. This is important because it really undermines the idea of any mandated statewide educational expectations.